

CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, and Jeff Merkley

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2014 World Cup Visitors Can Offset Carbon Footprint for Free



FIFA, soccer's governing body, announced that it will cover the cost of programs to neutralize carbon emissions from travel to 2014 World Cup matches in Brazil. FIFA and BP Target Neutral, a not-for-profit carbon management program run by BP, have launched an online system where ticket holders can sign up to have their carbon footprints neutralized with offsets from Brazil-based projects. BP expects to have about 50,000 ticket holders join the initiative. "FIFA and the Local Organizing Committee will offset 100 percent of their own operational emissions, and ... we are encouraging fans to neutralize the carbon emissions resulting from their travel to Brazil," said Federico Addiechi, head of FIFA Corporate Social Responsibility. The World Cup in continent-sized Brazil is expected to produce a record volume of carbon emissions for such events, mainly due to jet travel between venues, which in some cases are more than 3,000 miles apart. Initial estimates put the event's total emissions at 3.4 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), compared to around 2.7 million tons from the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. (Reuters)

S&P: Climate Change will Hurt Many Countries' Credit Ratings

Climate change will be a significant factor in sovereign credit ratings and is already putting them under downward pressure, Standard & Poor's Ratings Services (S&P) warned last week. S&P argued that climate change will hit countries' economic growth rates and public finances. "Climate change is likely to be one of the global mega-trends impacting sovereign credit worthiness, in most cases negatively," S&P said in a report. Recent bouts of extreme weather have drawn attention to the financial and economic effects of climate change and highlighted the growing cost of natural disasters. S&P says poorer and lower-rated countries—including Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Senegal—will be hit hardest by climate change. All of the 20 nations ranked most-vulnerable by S&P are emerging markets, with the vast majority in Africa or Asia. "This is in part due to their reliance on agricultural production and employment, which can be vulnerable to shifting climate patterns and extreme weather events, but also due to their weaker capacity to absorb the financial cost," S&P said, adding that it could contribute to rising global rating inequality. (NBC News)

Extreme Weather Events Increasingly Threaten Top Companies

Extreme weather events and rising seas are becoming more significant threats to the world's biggest companies, according to a new Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) report. S&P 500 companies disclosed to CDP that they are already experiencing—or predict they will experience within five years—about 45 percent of the climate change-related physical risks that will affect their operations, supply chains, and clients. That's up from 26 percent in 2011. "Significant costs are already being incurred," said CDP's Tom Carnac. "It's not just about making plans for the future, it's about having to change what they do today." About 60 companies disclosed risks from climate change, including buildings destroyed by hurricanes, rising costs for raw materials, increasing insurance premiums, slowing demand for cold-weather clothing, and higher winter heating expenses. For example, Hewlett-Packard said sales slipped as much as 7 percent after floods in Thailand in 2011 led to a shortage in disc-drive components. Waste Management Inc. said both flooding and drought affect the rate of organic decay at landfills, driving up the cost of collecting landfill gas. Revenue at Union Pacific, the largest U.S. railroad, slowed in 2012 as the worst drought in more than 50 years drove down corn shipments by 11 percent. (Bloomberg)

Report: Climate Change A Growing National-Security Threat

Climate change presents the United States with several security threats and has led to conflicts over food and water because of droughts and extreme weather, according to a new report from CNA Corporation Military Advisory Board. The report, written by a group of retired military officers, says that "climate change impacts are already accelerating instability in vulnerable areas of the world and are serving as catalysts for conflict." The authors want the U.S. military to plan to help manage catastrophes and conflicts both domestically and internationally, and they raised concerns about a wave of refugees fleeing rising sea levels. "These effects are threat multipliers that will aggravate stressors abroad, such as poverty, environmental degradation, political instability and social tensions—conditions that can enable terrorist activity and other forms of violence." They urged policymakers to act quickly because "the increasing risks from climate change should be addressed now because they will almost certainly get worse if we delay." (TIME/CNA) *Sheldon Whitehouse*